

Interview with Ms. Bertha Lopez-Huffman
Conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson and
Miss Karen Sheridan - May 20, 1976

TAPE 1 - SIDE 1 & 2

DODSON: Mrs. Huffman, I wonder if you'd tell us about your connections with the Lopez family, to start this interview off.

HUFFMAN: My father was Peter Lopez. His father was Valentine Lopez and my father's grandfather was Pedro Lopez, who had charge of the mission and the Indians of their affairs to carry. And well, I've lived in San Fernando, 80 years and I was born on the main street, on the corner of Maclay and San Fernando Road. My father had a hotel there and I was born in the hotel. That was 1895. A long time ago.

DODSON: Was your family, the ones who had the Lopez Station in the North part of the valley?

HUFFMAN: No, it was my grandfather's sister who married the other Lopez from San Gabriel, who had the Lopez Station. And that of course was my father's sister husband who had that station. I have been...I've been to it. Oh, we use to go and have picnics there, because there was

this stream...you know all the children...this wasn't like today, there were no babysitters...all the children went everyplace. Dances, fiestas...we'd go sometimes to visit and stay, not just one night, we'd stay a week, everybody. They were most generous and hospitable.

DODSON: Can you tell us a little bit about the sort of hospitality that existed then? What you did when you would go and stay a week and so on?

HUFFMAN: Well, they always had dances. They were very musical and they always had lots of music and food. I can still have visions of it, and you know how little children are and we played games. We were just happy. There was never any...you know being ugly to one another. We would just have the spirit of happiness. And of course our parents were the same way. And you know in the early days when guests would come from San Diego up to San Fernando, they would come up to one of the big haciendas and stay. And by the side of their bed was this little basket with gold coins in it. So if you had spent a little more money on the way out...well it was just a gift, whatever you wanted you

just helped yourself. But then later on the bandits came along and they spoiled that beautiful charity deal, which always happens. You know someone always has to spoil that...all the nice things. But I thought it was...I'll tell you another thing that to me was very funny, that the spirit of fun...my father used to drive a stagecoach over to [SIC] and the old road was just over the mountain, and very rough. And at Cape Vegas had...that was my father's first cousin...had them a new baby, so the baby was put on the back of the stagecoach...just like in a horse basket, and they were singing and going along...so they'd turn the team around and go back up the road, and they'd just be cooing in the basket. So that's...you know nothing worried anybody, they knew it was alright, nobody was going to hurt it.

DODSON: Well, you mentioned that your grandfather and his connection with the Indians. Could you tell us a little more about that?

HUFFMAN: My grandfather's father was Pedro Lopez, who had charge of the Indian affairs and I was pretty small at that time...but at that

time...see that was my great grandfather. Now my grandfather, Don Pedro Lopez, had a store at the mission and he said "oh when the Indians would come, you know and they use to pay for yardage with their indian beads or anything they had." And we use to have some beautiful things that unfortunately were given away to museums and things like that, where they really should belong. And I was trying to think of that museum and that man of quite authority, and he lived at one time in the house opposite the mission.

DODSON: Was it Harrington?

HUFFMAN: Harrington! Oh we knew him so well, he and his wife. And they were charming and they had that house fixed so beautifully. I mean you just thought you were stepping way back in the...many years passed. Because everything in it was authentic and they just made an effort...I don't know whether he has passed away...I know she did.

DODSON: Oh, isn't she still alive?

HUFFMAN: I've heard that she had passed away. I don't know.

DODSON: I think there is a Mrs. Harrington connected with the San Fernando Historical Association.

HUFFMAN: Well, I think that might be the sons wife. Because that could be...I know the older one. I'm almost positive she passed away. Is he still living?

DODSON: I don't think so.

HUFFMAN: I don't think so, cause he was...as I remember he was quite elderly. Very interesting people.

DODSON: Then your great grandfather was in charge of Indian Affairs for the San Fernando Mission?

HUFFMAN: That's right, Don Pedro Lopez. He was in charge. That was my father's grandfather.

DODSON: And you mentioned the discovery of gold. Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

HUFFMAN: Well, see there were two brothers, Pedro and Francisco. And Francisco had gone out herding

some cattle and he had an aunt who lived up in Placerita Canyon. And it was a hot summer's day and you know the caballeros those days, there is nothing...they just took a siesta whenever they wanted to. So he sits down under this big tree where his aunt was living and was having a rest. And she called down and told him that lunch was ready, and on his way up he stopped in the garden to pick up some onions and as he picked up the onions, he saw the little gold glittering. And that was in 1842 in Placerita Canyon.

DODSON: And what was his relation to you?

HUFFMAN: Well, let's see now, I have to stop and think. He was Pedro's son, so he was my father's uncle, so...my great uncle.

DODSON: Was there much mining for gold in Placerita Canyon after that?

HUFFMAN: Well, they had kind of a flurry and a lot of people came, but it soon died out. Then there was a big discovery at the Southern Mill after that and everybody went there.

DODSON: I think it's pretty well acknowledged though, that the real first discovery of gold in California was in Placerita Canyon...

HUFFMAN: Yes it was.

DODSON: By Francisco Lopez.

HUFFMAN: Yes, I have a little nugget about that big that one member of the family gave me that came from it. I have it in a little compact...just a future...some of the children to have it. It's nice to have.

DODSON: Do you have any traditions in your family that they knew any of the Peco's people?

HUFFMAN: Oh yes. Let's see now, a first cousin of mine's mother was married to a Peco, that was in...well it was a relative of the other Pecos, the early, early Pecos. There was a lot of Pecos here in San Fernando and they were all related to this Peo Peco, his family. There were many sons and daughters, and I know that some of the Lopez's married into the Peco family were cousins. I think that they would be my second cousins, my father's first cousin.

DODSON: Well, both Peo Peco and Andres Peco lived quite awhile during the American period, didn't they?

HUFFMAN: They did. And this Peo Peco's home down here...have you ever been in it?

DODSON: I've been to the Andres Peco Adobe. Is that the one you mean?

HUFFMAN: You mean the one in front of the mission?

DODSON: Yes.

HUFFMAN: Yes, it's very attractive. I haven't been there lately, so I don't know what's happened to it.

DODSON: It's a very interesting place. Well worth the visit.

HUFFMAN: Now you see, I had two brothers who died when they were infants and they're both buried in the old mission cemetery, back in the mission.

DODSON: Now that's a place I haven't been to, but I would very much like to visit it. Can you tell us some of the pioneers you know of that might

be buried in that cemetery back at the missio?
Is Andres Peco buried there or do you know?

HUFFMAN: I don't want to say, because I'm not positive. See I was pretty little when Andres Peco and Peo Peco were around, so it's kind of hard for me to remember that. I don't think that I could truthfully tell you correctly, so I don't wouldn't want to say. But I'm trying to think...because I know I have been as a child funeral there, besides my two brothers...that goes back quite aways, you see they were born before I was. So that makes it 90 years or so.

DODSON: Now the other day we went through the Lopez Adobe in San Fernando. Can you tell us the connection of that with your family.

HUFFMAN: Yes. You mean, here by the post office, this one in San Fernando?

DODSON: Yes.

HUFFMAN: Well, that was built for [SIC] and Catalina Lopez. Catalina Lopez was my grandfather's sister. My grandfather Valentine Lopez built it with Catalina and her husband [SIC]. I

spent many a happy time there. I had a great aunt who lived there, she was about 101 years old and I just remember...I don't know what my age, but I wasn't a young woman then, I was just a child. I went to see her, which we always had to go see everybody that was sick and she was sitting up in bed, the cutiest little thing you ever saw. She had a sack of Bull Durham in her hand and cigarette papers, and she was rolling cigarettes. My mother said my eyes hung down here, cause I never seen a lady smoke before. I was so shocked, but afterwards I thought how cut it was. Just like a cowboy would do. They called her aunt Tina, I don't know what her real name was, but I remember that incident.

DODSON: Now has that adobe been remodeled much or does it look much now, much as it did as you remember it?

HUFFMAN: Yes, I have pictures of it long ago and it's just...in the back they built on a little, you know to make more room...some rooms to make it more modern. But the front and the main part of the house is exactly like it use to be many, many years ago.

DODSON: I think we heard that they had turned it into apartments for awhile and they did build on some rooms or something.

HUFFMAN: Yes, in the back. And then a doctor rented the first part. You see, that house was left to Catalina's Lopez's children. She had several children and Mrs. John T. Wilson was one, and Mrs. Viegas. Oh there were so many, I couldn't name all of them. But they all had children and when Catalina and her husband died, the children inherited the place. But I have been told that they have sold off the...you know their interest in it. And I understand that the city is taking it over as a museum or something.

DODSON: Yes, it has been taken over by some group now.

HUFFMAN: Yes, San Fernando and I have sent money to it, and my daughter has donated. They have had dinners and things to get money to keep it like it should be and not let it run down. Because it's a pity that so many old places in California that should be taken care of and are not. Because California has so much beautiful history. So colorful and you know, we use to

have at the mission...well that was after I was married...but Mr. Presley who put on the Santa Barbara Fiestas came down here and I had the second lead, and I took the part of one of my relatives and I tell you, I was just like in a haze. I was living clear back...all of this...they just portrayed everything, the mission and the life around the mission. And they had record crowds. They just showed...from the time when the Indians came and the early Spaniards.

DODSON: Would you say that the coming in of the Americans made a great deal of difference or did some of those Spanish traditions then live on even during the American period?

HUFFMAN: Well, I think that it did for quite some time and then as I say...you know there was an intermarriage there, like my father married an Irish girl, and then the aunts of mine married...let's see Mr. Miller was not Spanish and his wife was, she was a Lopez. And they just seemed to mingle and as they all got older they seemed to move away or the children were up going and getting married, and they wanted

to be near them, and they died off. So many of the family have gone.

DODSON: Now you mentioned John Wilson. Could you tell us just who he was, I've come across his name before?

HUFFMAN: John T. Wilson, he was married to my father's first cousin, who was Grace Lopez. That was Catalina Lopez...that was my grandfather's sister. She had two boys and she and my mother were very, very close friends. See I was born when my mother was sixteen and so they were just so close and she had no boys, so she practically adopted me and if I could...and I would stay over at Aunt Graces. And I would go and stay...and it would begin to get dark and I'd say "I guess I'll go home now." And Roland who was a wonderful character, Rolando Wilson, that was Aunt Grace's son and John T. Wilson's son. And he and I were just like that, we could've been brother and sister.

DODSON: Mrs. Huffman you were about to tell about your house in San Fernando, we'd all like to hear about that.

We lived down the corner of Mission Boulevard and San Fernando Road. And my mother built a house, instead of being right on the lot...you know like you put it this way or this facing this street, she put it, I call it kiddy corner, across the lot. Her kitchen had a big bay window in it and it was like a living room. She had this big old cook stove, great big chair for my dad to sit in, open the oven and put his feet up on it. And always something good was cooking. I never knew it was...I had to away...that was her one thought in life, that I could have all the children I wanted and as I grew up, young people, they would come to my home. We had a big house and plenty of room for everybody to sleep. It was just one big house party every weekend. But she knew where I was and she just watched me like hawk, because you know San Fernando then...most of them young people were way to old for me. Like I said when I was in the third grade, there were seveteen year old boys, well that's no association there at all. So, we just had...my daddy would get out the hay wagon, we'd go on hay rides. He and my mother and a couple of aunts, we were always well chaperoned. And food, she always made these great big chocolate

cakes, I can see them now. She had them on the kitchen sink and everybody would come in and cut a slice. You know, just very informal, but fun. Lot of laughter and played the piano a lot. So we played and we danced, and we sang. If we had a little bit more of that today, it would be wonderful.

DODSON: So you really don't think that you were deprived of things, because you didn't have television sets and all that sort of thing?

HUFFMAN: I would never have time. I was busy with my horse and buggy or riding my donkey, or...I was the busiest thing you'd ever saw. No I never missed a thing in my life.

DODSON: Did you attend church at the mission?

HUFFMAN: No, I went to a little church...well I had been to church at the mission, but I went to a little church in San Fernando.

DODSON: What was the name of that church?

HUFFMAN: It's in that book there.

DODSON: Would you happen to know if whether it's still standing?

HUFFMAN: No...see here was Sailor Street, my Aunt Grace lived there and we lived here, and then right around the corner was the church. And that's all been taken in...that's all building...not J.C. Penny...but it's the next street just past San Fernando. And that's all built up with big buildings. No it's not there anymore. It was a pretty little church. I think it was Santa Rosa, but I would stand corrected on that.

DODSON: Now you mentioned that your early eduction was in a convent. Was that in San Fernando?

HUFFMAN: No, in East Los Angeles.

DODSON: Can you tell us a little bit about what sort of things you studied and what you did when you were there?

HUFFMAN: Well, I was quite young when I went...I think I was maybe seven or eight, and I studied...oh they had all kinds of handwork. And like I said, I was very musical, so I had special courses in music and piano. They put on a lot

of musicals and programs, you know at the school, the Dominican Order. A very interesting thing happened to me, I think this is interesting. One of the sisters, Carmen Santa Lucia...Sister Lucy was her name, not Santa Lucia, Sister Lucy. She was not very well, but I just adored her and she was always so nice. She had to leave the sisterhood, because of her health and she married my father's first cousin. And my husband in later years was a doctor, brought all of her children into the world. Which I think is interesting. But she was just a lovely person. A sister's life today is simple, not anything like it used to be. They slept on hard board thing, no mattress, no thing...oh yes their life was nothing. Now of course today they can wear shorter dresses and not all these habits that they wore. Cause I know that this Holy Cross Hospital, my oldest daughter was the only lady that was on the board and she did a lot of work up there with the sisters. They could come down and visit her...before that they couldn't anything like that. They had to just stay in the convent.

DODSON: Now you were mentioning that they lived a broader life, would you say that the discipline that you were under was stricter than would be true now than when you were a child?

HUFFMAN: I believe so, they were very strict when I was a child. I have written 5,000 times I will not talk in church and I won't do this again. And you know what ridiculous thing that is to have a child sit down and write 500 times or a thousand times that...I was just a little child just big enough to write. But I was always talking. You can't have your fun if you just sit and be quiet.

DODSON: Well was this true at home then, that you feel that the discipline at home was stricter than it would be now?

HUFFMAN: My mother was quite strict, but I think she had a very good reason. Number one, she was not well and she couldn't do things that you'd like and take me. Now my Aunt Grace and Roland, who I said was such a fabulous man, when we would go to little parties, like in high school, I would always go with him. I was never allowed to have a boyfriend. I was allowed to have

friends come to the house. I was always
chaparoned, just like way back in the dark
ages, when they always had someone with them.
The Spanish girls, like my father's sisters,
they couldn't...the Dona sat with their date in
the living room. Nothing like today.

DODSON: So that was the typical then of the social life
among the persons of Spanish descent at that
time?

HUFFMAN: Oh yes, very typical. Because, always a girl
could not go downtown or out anyplace without
chaparones. Well, just like in the South,
remember they always had a colored man who
always went along.

DODSON: Was there a contrast when the Americans began
to come into the valley, between the way they
treated their children and the way the persons
of Spanish descent did then in those things,
did you see a difference?

HUFFMAN: Not to great a difference. The people...of
course the families we knew were the early
pioneers, you see those people that came in.
And we associated with them and they

intermingled and they seemed to me that they had the same ideas of what their children should do and all of our parties we very well chaparoned. Even in high school, they had more chaparones then they had children.

SHERIDAN: Where did you go to college?

HUFFMAN: I went to the University of California and I had went to the University of Berkeley, and took a refresher course up there. That's when I graduated and I taught school for 21 years.

SHERIDAN: Did a lot of your classmates that graduated with you go onto to college?

HUFFMAN: Yes several of them. They were...you see when I went to the University of California...the first place I went to school was in Los Angeles State Normal School, which was up on the hill. Then they moved it out...in Los Angeles...

DODSON: Is that the one that became UCLA then went to Westwood?

HUFFMAN: Yes. And I remember I was in agriculture class, why I don't know, I guess to be outdoors. And I planted ivy and everytime I

look at ivy, I say to my husband, I planted that ivy. You see what we had to do to go to that University...well I really graduated from there, of course it was UCLA then, they called it, but not out at Westwood.

DODSON: It was the one which is now on Vermont?

HUFFMAN: Yes, then it went to Westwood. But that one on Vermont really...I got up...you see there was a streetcar that came to San Fernando at that time, the Red Car. And I got on, you would die laughing, my cousin lived a block over here and there was girl next door, the three of us would come running down the main street of San Fernando, of course there were no automobiles nothing on it, at 6:00 o'clock to catch that streetcar...the motor would be running and the conductor would be watching for each one of us and we would get on it just by the skin of our teeth, and then we'd go to school and get home at 6:00 o'clock at night.

DODSON: When were you allowed to begin to date without a chaperone? Was that after you became engaged or what?

HUFFMAN: Well, no when I graduated from the University of California, I went down...I had friends living in Tucson Arizona and I met this gentleman who had a big cattle ranch, and he said where is your teacher, my hair was down and I had a ribbon, and he said you're a teacher now. Our ranch has not had a school, any classes for two years, and if we don't have a teacher out there we are going to lose our allotment of money. And he said would you like to go? So I go to this ranch and the school was attached to the main ranch house, a lovely place, and I remember I was scared to death, because the windows down and one night I heard...I was the only one in the house. And I was getting ready to have school and children came, and these boys were seventeen, eighteen and nineteen years old, and no little children here, and I said to one of them, "If you don't behave, you're going to have to stay after school" cause they speak Spanish. So he tells me in Spanish, "You're so pretty I'd be glad to stay after school," then I didn't know what I was going to do, I was petrified. What am I going to do now. But then some people came out to the ranch and were staying there, and the fun of it was, they entertained obviously and

everthing was just beautiful. So they were having this big house party and the manager said just close up the school, and join in with the party. And we just had a gorgeous time. Now that's when I was in Nogales, this girl had a sister who lived in Nogales, lovely people. That's when one of the soldiers from Alabama went down to get Pancho Villa, you remember that...well that's when I met Dr. Right, he was down there from Alabama with the troops and I got married. I was teaching...I was transferred from that place to this school and you should of seen me...you know when you can play the piano and sing, you're very popular and I was having such a good time and I was getting dates for all of these teachers, none of them were having any fun. I knew my husband for two weeks and got married.

SHERIDAN: You knew your husband for two weeks before you married him?

HUFFMAN: Uh, huh.

SHERIDAN: Just two weeks?

HUFFMAN: Two weeks. Well I knew him two days and I was engaged.

DODSON: I'm wondering Mrs. Huffman, when you first decided to become a teacher?

HUFFMAN: Well we came...got married, went to Alabama and then the war, and then my husband came back and moved here. So I had two children, and doctor was just starting in his practice. So I knew the principal real well and she said, "Bertha why don't you come down and teach?" and I said well I'm eligible. All I had to do was take an examination on the Constitution of the United States and got already for that and took it.

SHERIDAN: What year was that when you started teaching?

HUFFMAN: I'd say 1921, that's close enough and I taught the San Fernando school down here. I taught the 2nd and 3rd grades, dancing...you know the teachers would take a class of mine and I would teach dancing.

DODSON: Were you bilingual or did many of your students just speak Spanish without English?

HUFFMAN: I had to make them speak...only when I couldn't make them understand when I would give them a Spanish word. You know, by describing something, they'd sit and look like they were in a daze, then I'd give it to them in Spanish, and then I give it to them in English, then the next time the word was used, they knew it. And you know, it became very handy because so many times the poor little things didn't understand what you were talking about. You know, I had when I was teaching school which was so much fun, I made up an orchestra, just in my class for 2nd graders, and I had a boy who had an I.Q. of about 40 or 50 in the class, and he was just jolly and pleasant. And we get these tires and make drums out of tin cans, I tell you he just beat that thing, he had more...and we made all things that we use to shake, we didn't buy the real maracas, and I'd get little bells and tie them together. They could play to the skater's waltz...in fact we put on a show before the Kawanis Club, it was so good. You see, this child who could do nothing...well, the water would be running down his face, he would just be playing so hard and just loving every minute. It was so gratifying.

DODSON: Were most of your students Spanish speaking?

HUFFMAN: Most of them were Mexicans. You see, there was quite a influx in there and it's wonderful to see how that school and the teachers, and how they build...they all had nice little houses. They had nice flowers and were taught cleanliness, and had been able to go out and work. A girl that use to work for me when she was 13, is still working for my oldest daughter. They're most appreciative people and very fun loving people. I can't say enough about them, nice things about them.

DODSON: Well I certainly agree. I loving having an implant in my classes. In your home did you speak Spanish?

HUFFMAN: No, my Spanish...my father use to ridicule me, says that I was the most illiterate...he spoke beautiful English and beautiful Spanish. But my mother...it was really astonishing because she was so fair and not an ounce of Spanish blood in her, and she could speak Spanish like a native. And people were just shocked at her. You know, when some of the hired help didn't do what she wanted and she would just come out

and...and they would just stand there and look at her, because you don't expect that kind of language to come out of her mouth. I think she was only sixteen when she was married, I mean I was born just before she was seventeen. She lived with my grandmother and my grandfather, so of course they spoke nothing but Spanish, and she picked it up very young.

SHERIDAN: Where did your father and mother meet?

HUFFMAN: Here in San Fernando. My mother's mother was divorced from her father...my mother's father who lived up in Idaho and I think my mother came up from Los Angeles to visit someone in San Fernando, when my father met her. She was the prettiest thing you ever laid your two eyes on. Just a beauty and as an older woman, she died when she was 82, her hair was the prettiest white you've ever seen. Now my hair has been gray since I was in my 30's, my father's hair is what we called iron gray and my two daughters are now getting some gray, and you know how young people...don't you touch it, I'll disown you. They're not touching their hair because I think it's so pretty nice.

DODSON: What business was your father in?

HUFFMAN: He was a farmer. They called him chuck hole Pete because he was [SIC] here, you know they use to have these holes and they use to call those chuck holes. I remember that so well. He was a [SIC] overseer, he was sheriff, he use to know so many at the Los Angeles Police and Jail, and he would take prisoners up to San Quentin. He would go all over the country and pick somebody that had to be brought back. But the biggest thing that he did was...in later years, he put in big boulevards, a lot of paved roads around the valley. He had put them in, they put in cement sidewalks and that kind of work. But he did lot of ranching.

DODSON: What kind of animals did you have?

HUFFMAN: I had two burros and I always had two of everything. My mother and father, whatever, they bought me, I always had to share with my friends. One of my best friends today lived on a ranch and her mother was sort of sick, so she came to live us and I remember when I got a new dress, she got a new dress, if I got shoes, she got shoes. It was a very happy situation.

DODSON: What did your father raise particularly on his farm?

HUFFMAN: Wheat and some alfalfa, but mostly barley and wheat that they baled. You know, as a youngster I use to go out there and watch the baling machine. I don't know if you've ever watched one before in your life. And when those bales would come out, I could almost call out how much they weighed. It was just sort of a talent.

DODSON: Where was the farm located here in the valley?

HUFFMAN: North of San Fernando. You know where the aqueduct...it's all in the underwater now.

DODSON: So many of those early farms have now been subdivided, in fact I guest all of them have probably.

HUFFMAN: Well, you know San Fernando, I remember when I was a little child, I remember my mother telling me this more than I remember. I had a little wagon and a cocker spaniel, and San Fernando the main street was just boardwalk, and of course there was just one saloon and

that's all there was down the main street. You know, when they wanted to call any of us I could hear my Aunt Grace calling, "Rolando", and you'd hear that all over town. And he used to deliver mail and he had the cutiest pony, and he'd pick the milk pan, like this and he never spill a drop of milk going down main street.

DODSON: What would you regard as the most important change that has occurred in the valley since you were a child here?

HUFFMAN: Well personally, I'd like to see some of things that we used to step on our door and look over the valley, and see the yellow poppies there. Now what do you see, all these subdivisions. I believe in progress, but to me that was the most beautiful thing, just like a big pan of gold spread out there. I think San Fernando has made great progress.

DODSON: Well you can look back on the days when the valley was agricultural and there were very few houses, you could look across all of these fields.

HUFFMAN: From our backyard, I could stand there and look all over the...there was nothing. There was our house on the corner. You see, we owned the whole block and she built houses and would rent them. My cousin built his home, they sold their lot to the Safeway, but there were no big stores, there was just this little country store, that had a post office. And I can remember going in there at 5 and 6 years old, walking to the store and I always had a string of kids with me, and I'd buy candy for all of them, and I'd say charge it "Pete", and they'd charge it to my dad. Even then they'd let me have a charge account. But there was nothing in between. Oh, the valley has made fantastic progress. I just like the beauty of it. I'm very social. The things that we use to do to me were just so much more fun. Now it's Mrs. so and so, tries to outdo the other one, but nobody did that then, everybody brought their best cake, best salad, and they would put everything together and you just loved everyone that was there. There was no bickering or back talking.

SHERIDAN: Can you remember the picnic they had on the day when the water was brought over the aquaduct for the first time?

HUFFMAN: I was the first one there, don't you tell me nothing happened. We had a hay wagon full of kids and chicken, and potato salad, and everything went up there. The sun was beating down and we stood there, with our mouths open and they opened that gate and the water came down. I should say I do remember.

SHERIDAN: So after the water came into the valley did your father start farming some other crops, besides the wheat.

HUFFMAN: No, he still did the wheat. He died at 62, which is pretty young.

SHERIDAN: But the valley was able to...

HUFFMAN: Oh, it did a lot for the valley, there's no two ways about that. I mean it did so much for progress, which I'm definitely for, but still it was so pretty. It was what you would say a beautiful valley. I mean the mountains were clear, wild flowers were in abundance. We use

to go out to the hills and...you didn't have to worry about someone hitting you in the head, everybody was your friend. And we'd pick flowers.

SHERIDAN: Can you remember the depression?

HUFFMAN: Yes, but it didn't seem to affect us any. I mean my immediate family.

DODSON: I think that's true of the people that we have interviewed. I wonder if it didn't strike in this valley as hard as other places. Perhaps people had other types of holdings or something, and weren't as affected here as some other places.

HUFFMAN: Well, I don't really know. I heard them talking about the depression, but as far as I was concerned it didn't affect me in the least.

SHERIDAN: Do you remember the earthquake, the Sylmar quake of 1971?

HUFFMAN: I do, I was living here and felt the whole apartment moving...we were in a smaller apartment. I said to my husband it's an

earthquake, get between the doors and he jumped, of course he had never experienced an earthquake. Oh yes, my youngest daughter is married to an Italian, the big olive people up in Sylmar...

DODSON: Cinzanos!

HUFFMAN: Cinzanos, that's my oldest...youngest daughter is married to John Cinzano's son. His mother had...they all have lovely homes up there. And in that kitchen...on the kitchen floor, the whole floor just went down. They lost a lot of things, but luckily they were not hurt. I know innumerable people from up there that just lost everything. And when I rode...and later on when you could get in, I just couldn't believe what I've heard. You know that lovely freeway that all went down. You just couldn't conceive of such a thing. I'm scared to death of earthquakes.

DODSON: Did you see the mission after the quake? What did it do to the mission?

HUFFMAN: I didn't see it, but I don't think it did to much damage. I think it knocked down a few of

the old adobe walls, but it seems pretty good to me. Of course, I haven't been in it recently, but I didn't hear that it had done to much damage. Now in San Fernando it was surprising that an old hotel that had been there forever and we use to go on Sundays, I remember for dinner there, it was a real treat. Well, that just practically took that place to pieces. They have built it very nicely now San Fernando to look like a mission city, that Spanish archecture, which I think is lovely.

DODSON: But the earthquake did knock down many of the structures in San Fernando?

HUFFMAN: Oh yes, inumerable ones, yes many, many.

DODSON: Do you know of any of the older buildings that are still standing?

HUFFMAN: Well the old Maclay Building, which I tell you took almost all of the...it's there, but its very, very old. I don't know why it didn't all go down. And the Reny Theatre, this theatre that I was telling you about, they had a lot of damage to their big theatre, but that was more

modern. That wasn't what you would call an old, old...but not way back.

DODSON: Where was the Maclay Building located?

HUFFMAN: Right on Maclay Street. You know where the railroad tracks are? Well up about...in the second block on the left hand side.

DODSON: Do you know of any other old structures out there of historical importance?

HUFFMAN: I don't think so...not that I know of. I know some old family homes, but not the Spanish people. And the [SIC] church was badly damaged in San Fernando, but not knocked down completely, just parts.

DODSON: What do you think of the changes and things like fashions, and morality and fads so on, from the time you were a child until now?

HUFFMAN: Well, they wore all together different clothes. When I was a child, I remember my mother had the bussel on the back and all this high collars, and long sleeves. It choked me to death when I get a high collar on.

DODSON: Do you think things have improved then?

HUFFMAN: Oh yes, they certainly have improved. I think...how can I word this so it sounds correct or the way I want it to sound. The young people of my vintage, I think have more respect for their parents. They knew they had to mind them, when my father and mother told me something, I did it without any back talk. And I've seen some of the youngsters today and I'm in just in awe that the parents allow it. I can see a great change in that, definitely. In my time we went everyplace we had...every advantage that could be given to us and we had to make our own entertainment. And now, as you know, there is the automobile, there is the movies and the things that people...they can go to and do, and get into with the wrong crowd and all this dope and all this business. I'm just so greatful that all of my grandchildren, not a one of them have ever given...I know that there are a lot of parents that try to...but I think that the majority, if your parents have time for you and sit down and tell you the things...Now I know that when my girls were growing up and when they went out on a date, they knew what time we expected them home. We

talked about once and that was it. And now my daughter went out one night and she didn't get home until late, and I'm thinking she's never done this before in her life, and I hoped that nothing had happened. The first thing I thought was that they had a wreck. A little bit before the phone rings and she says, "We ran out of gas and he had to walk, and I don't know where he went to get the gas". Well they came home and he was so apologetic and came in, and sat down. But you know, they knew that they must get in touch with us, because we wouldn't stand for it. Now as I say, when I was growing, that's the way I was brought up. My mother says you're going to do this, you wash those dishes, and I washed the dishes, or I would get a good paddling.

SHERIDAN: What would you say is the modern technology that you appreciate the most these days?

DODSON: You can't think of one thing that you value of great deal?

HUFFMAN: Well as I've said before, I liked it the way it was a long time ago. We didn't know what it was to lock our doors. I'm scared to death to

go out at night and when I do go, I never wear any jewelry and I keep most of my things...I've been very fortunate to have lovely things.

SHERIDAN: Do you remember what it was like to have outdoor restrooms?

HUFFMAN: Don't make me laugh...oh I sure do. Yes dear, I do.

DODSON: Thats one of the things you wouldn't want to see repeated, I imagine?

HUFFMAN: No sir, no. Especially the times now. Oh yes I remember that.

SHERIDAN: Do you appreciate your life, like I heard one lady telling about how they, every morning they would come out and have to take the globes off of lanterns and clean them out before the day started?

HUFFMAN: Well I remember, I cleaned many a lamp shade and I just hated it. Then my mother built this house and of course it was one of the nicest houses in San Fernando back then. There is a picture in that book, which is very cute. We

had gas and it never failed when we had company, the settling pack was empty and my father had to...but then we had electricity and the telephone. I can remember as each of those things came to our house and how wonderful it was to have. I did appreciate it and enjoy it.

DODSON: Did you have running water in your house in the earliest part of your life?

HUFFMAN: Yes we did.

SHERIDAN: Did you say you were among the first families to have a car?

HUFFMAN: Yes, my father had a Studebaker. I think they called it EMF and he had...see when I was a young about sixteen, my father gave me what they called an Indian pony and I had a little buggy. Oh was I something and it was just the cutiest thing, and the buggy was so light. That was my transportation, just like when my girls grew up, they had cars. But mine was a horse and buggy.

SHERIDAN: As a teenager and as a child, do you remember putting the beaches to good use, did you enjoy times at the beaches, like we do today?

HUFFMAN: Oh yes and every summer we'd go rent a house or something like that. Oh yes, we enjoyed it. Being an only child, my mother was always so afraid that something was going to happen to me. And instead of being a meek and mild child, I was always doing something strenuous and wild, and it made a nervous wreck out of her. And I had a little bicycle about this big and I use to ride it down the main street in San Fernando Road. And I didn't ride on the seat like I should, I would be doing tricks on the seat, my feet on the seat and riding without any hands, sitting on the handlebars. I always had to do something different, never like a lady should do.

DODSON: Now Karen asked you about the beaches, I imagine one difference was in the type of bathing suit then and now, wasn't it?

HUFFMAN: You should of seen the pretty one I had. My face was the only thing that wasn't covered, long sleeves, and a skirt...oh they have some

pictures of me, to change the subject, in the bank in San Fernando when I played basketball. These bloomers...and I they just love to show them when I go into the bank, if they show to me. It's embarrassing...as short as I was, I was a foward. My daughter gave me a book that I kept in the parties that we went to. That's when I was Mrs. Rush, and I had won first prize.

DODSON: Well do you think that's an improvement or something bad, the changes in fashions?

HUFFMAN: Oh, I think some of the things we wore long ago were ridiculous. Young girls sixteen years old with a skirt clear down...I could hardly breath in it...down to your ankles just for street wear. I think some of the children today go to extremes, I'm not narrow minded, but I think that when a great big fat woman as big as a garage comes out in a bikini, why I'm ready to leave town. Haven't you seen them? Embarrassing moments, I'm telling you.

DODSON: What is your happiest recollection of the valley would you say? Is there anything in the

history of the valley that you regard with a special feelings of pleasure?

HUFFMAN: Well, I think the thing that I can remember having the most fun as a child, is that what you mean as a child?

DODSON: Oh, it doesn't matter.

HUFFMAN: It's when we'd have these picnics and barbecues. You know barbecues were a big thing. They'd dig the pits and my father was a past master at that. I'd just love to go, cause I guess I've always love to eat. And they always had such good food and such good cakes. My Aunt Grace made macaroni and chile, like nobody else could make it. Somebody made a coconut cake, that nobody else could do. I liked things that and get togethers. Our family is very close, very close together and very affectionate with each other. And I miss that thing since a lot of the family has passed away, when you'd go to visit them, why you were so welcomed and they made you feel so good. Well, I feel that way about my family too.

DODSON: Would you say the holidays like the Fourth of July and Chirstmas Day were celebrated any differently when you were a child then they are now? Did they seem to mean more then or was there a difference?

HUFFMAN: Well, I think that...as I remember, of course I love firecrackers and I'd like to hold them in my hand to see if they go off without burning the...and do things like that. We use to have these sky rockets and all of those pretty things. Unless you go to a big park or someplace, which I guess they have to have it under control now. Of course then you see, there was nothing to burn. The house was here and we went out to open fields, and have a good time. The biggest thing in San Fernando that use to thrill me, is that you would hear somebody holler, "Ralph's horses are running away", you know the horses use to run away and they'd come tearing down the street with the buggy, with nobody in it. And the horses...and somebody would jump on back of that horse and run and get them, you know like they do in the movies. This guy Ralph had more run away horses, then anybody I ever knew.

DODSON: Can you think of some event or any event in
your life that we haven't asked about at all,
which you think the future ought to know about?

END TAPE 1

Interview with Ms. Bertha Lopez-Huffman
Conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson and
Miss Karen Sheridan - May 20, 1976

TAPE 2 - SIDE 1

DODSON: You were going to tel us about the coming of the Red Cars, the Pacific Electric into the valley.

HUFFMAN: I think in one of my books there, it has the date. But, anyways it came from Los Angeles through Van Nuys, and up to San Fernando. And on the day that it came in, well the whole town turned out and it stopped right there at the Porter Hotel. And as I say, it was a big thing...they had bands and they made a big occasion out of it. they had a big dance and a big dinner at the hotel. All the dignitaries, Mr. Brand, from Glendale, he was there and all of the important people. It was fun.

DODSON: Speaking of important people, did you happen to know Senator Maclay?

HUFFMAN: I knew his family, I knew his sons, but I didn't know him, he was before me. I might of met him, my parents did, but I didn't...not

that I remember. But I knew his son and his grandchildren, and all that, but that was...

DODSON: I think you mentioned that you knew some of the Lankershim Family. Which members of the family did you know?

HUFFMAN: Well I'm trying to think, uh...I had it on the tip of my tongue.

DODSON: Was it Colonel Jake Lankershim, wasn't he, uh...

HUFFMAN: I just knew...my mother knew him, because Mr. Weddington you know, who really owned practically all of the town of Lankershim. Have you heard anything? He's an old timer. Well my mother almost married him. Fred Weddington's daughter and my younger daughter are very, very close friends. And Mrs. Weddington, Fred's wife was a very good friend of mine. so I knew that of Lankershim, they call it North Hollywood now. But I know that my family knew the Lankershims.

DODSON: Could you mention any of the other old families associated with the history of the valley that you knew or tell us anything about them?

HUFFMAN: I have...Mrs. Shoag who lives here in the valley, a very delightful...I mean her daughter Gracie Calderon. Have you heard of that family?

DODSON: Yes.

HUFFMAN: Well, see her mother was a Lopez, my father's first cousin, so I'm second cousin to her. And we just went to her 50th wedding anniversary not too long ago at their home. She's one of the old families and her husband, Mr. Calderon was Mayor of San Fernando. But see, that's all of her parents...that's all the Lopez's, and there were several Lopez girls and they all married, and had families and lived in San Fernando. We were of the same generation. The old Viegas family, that was another Lopez girl that was married to a Viegas, but they have both passed away. A lot of the older families have moved in, they're not Spanish in San Fernando and they're the ones who have been giving out...like I told Muriel, I said Muriel,

"If they don't know, they shouldn't give the wrong information." I know several families that have been in San Fernando a long time and they knew Pete Lopez, but they had no idea who Pete Lopez's father was or connection with the mission, or any of that. Well they just weren't there when it happened. They moved in you know...and you know how something gets started, the skuttle butt going around.

DODSON: Well, I think we're going to be sure that we have it all absolutely clear. So, the name of your father was?

HUFFMAN: Pedro Leon Lopez.

DODSON: And his father, who would be his grandfather was?

HUFFMAN: Valentin Lopez.

DODSON: And your great grandfather was?

HUFFMAN: Was Pedro Lopez.

DODSON: And the one who made the discovery of gold in Placerita Canyon was?

HUFFMAN: Francisco Lopez.

DODSON: Now Mrs. Huffman, to ask you again the discoverer of gold in Placerita Canyon in 1842 was?

HUFFMAN: Francisco Lopez.

DODSON: And can you tell us his relationship to you?

HUFFMAN: He was my great grandfather's son. And his son Francisco would be my...would have to be my great uncle, wouldn't it?

DODSON: Yes, I think that's right.

HUFFMAN: That's right, yes, that's right.

DODSON: So you owe to the family who made...really the first discovery of gold in California?

HUFFMAN: The discovery of gold in Southern California, yes.

DODSON: Which is quite a distinction, I'd say.

HUFFMAN: Well, I'm very proud of it. I often felt...because I know that several people around here always say, "oh, sit down and tell me something about California history." But like I said I have to stop and think, because you see Valentin Lopez, my grandfather and Pedro Lopez were brothers, and then Pedro Lopez was the father.

You have been listening to an interview with Mrs. Bertha Lopez-Huffman. Mrs. Huffman is a great granddaughter of Don Pedro Lopez, who is Major Domo of the San Fernando Valley Mission, as such he was in charge of the work of the Indians connected with the mission and in charge, in general of the mission's farming activities. Mrs. Huffman is also related to Francisco Lopez, he was a great uncle of hers. Francisco Lopez was the discoverer of gold in Placerita Canyon in 1842, which was the first really important discovery of gold in California. This interview with Mrs. Huffman was conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson, Curator of the Los Angeles Valley College Historical Museum and by Mrs. Karen Sheridan, Museum Aide and Field Deputy to Dr. Dodson. The date of the interview is May 20, 1976.